

Charter School Performance Management Process

**Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Transformation,
September 2010**



FOR COMMENT AND INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

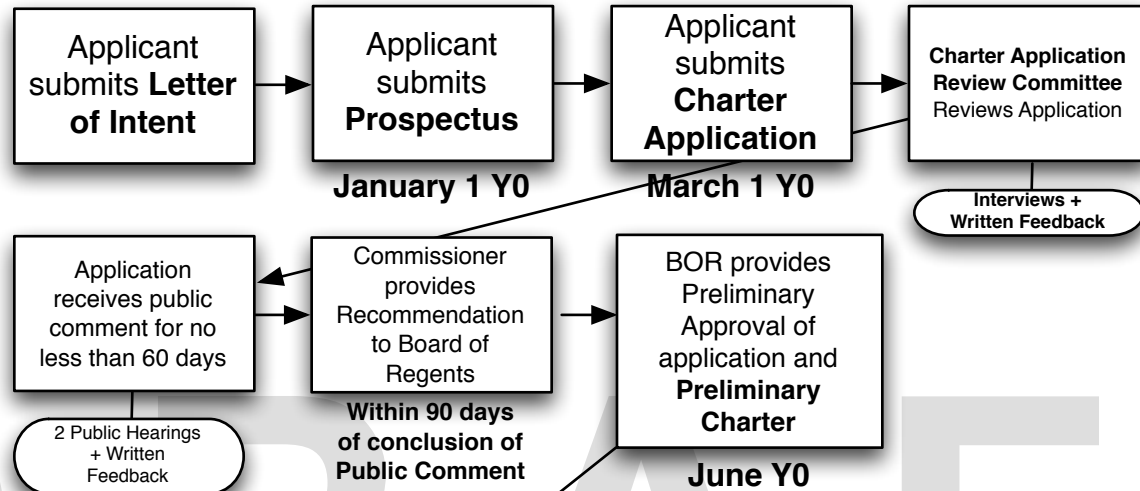
INTRODUCTION

This process chronicles the key activities of the Board of Regents, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), and charter school applicants and holders over the course of a five-year charter term. It is the result of collaboration and careful research of best practices in charter school authorizing. Representatives of the Office of Transformation met with representatives from the League of Charters and key RIDE personnel to develop this process. The work of that body incorporated many of the best ideas from highly-respected authorizers from around the country, including the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, Central Michigan University's Center for Charter Schools, the Indianapolis Mayor's Charter School Office, and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Charter School's Office.

Throughout this document, portions of flow charts are used to help orient the reader. The complete flow charts are presented at the beginning of major sections, followed by explanations of each stage of the process covered by the total chart. Kindly note that the **bolded** items in the flow chart boxes are processes and documents that the Office of Transformation will continue to develop over the coming year should this process gain approval from the Board of Regents.

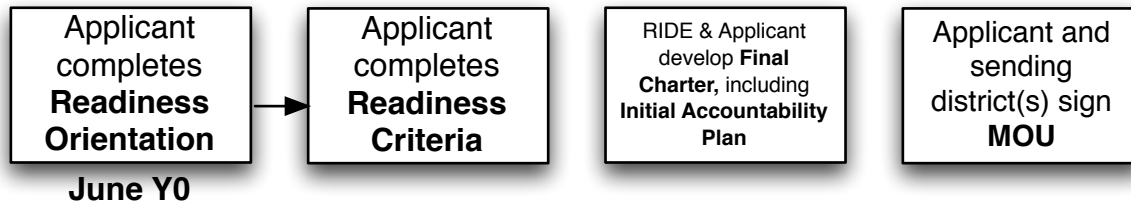
PLANNING YEARS 0&1: Application and Authorization

Phase 1: Preliminary Approval



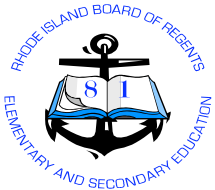
Phase 3: Final Authorization

Phase 2: Readiness



Board of Regents grant **Final Charter.**

March Y1



PLANNING YEARS 0 & 1: APPLICATION AND AUTHORIZATION

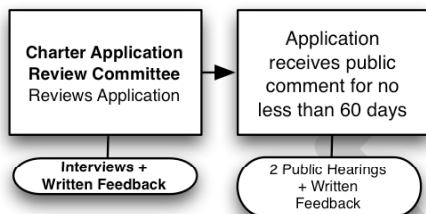
PHASE 1: PRELIMINARY APPROVAL

Multi-stage Application Process



Eligible applicants seeking a charter will be required to submit a letter of intent and Prospectus before January 1, one and half years before the school year in which the charter school is to be established. The Office of Transformation will offer responses to these preliminary documents that will help applicants strengthen their charter's conceptual design. The most promising applicants will be encouraged to complete and submit full charter applications by March 1 of the same year.

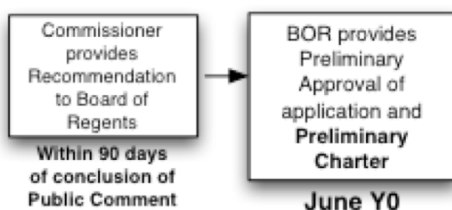
Review and Public Comment



Full applications will be reviewed by the Charter Application Review Committee comprised of Board of Regents members, and education professionals from within and outside RIDE. This advisory committee will help RIDE to determine whether or not the application satisfactorily responds to the elements contained in the RIDE charter guidelines. It is not the responsibility of the committee to make final decisions on charter authorization.

Rhode Island's charter law requires that after receiving a satisfactory application, the Commissioner must provide a public comment period of no less than sixty days, during which time at least two public hearings on the application will be held in the district where the charter school is proposed to be located. The commissioner will entertain written feedback from the community as well.

Approval

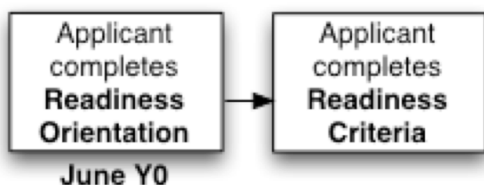


The Commissioner will decide whether or not to recommend the granting of a charter within ninety days of the conclusion of the public comment period. Written notice of the Commissioner's decision will be provided to the project applicant.

If the Commissioner's decision is to recommend the granting of the charter, the recommendation is referred to the Board of Regents for a decision on whether or not to grant the charter. The Board of Regents decide whether or not to authorize the charter based on all relevant information, which includes the commissioner's recommendation. The Board of Regents' decision, complete with reasons and any conditions will be made available to the applicant and the public no later than June 29th of the same year in which the applicant submits the Letter of Intent and Prospectus.

Approved applicants will be granted a Preliminary Charter. Receipt of this charter does not imply that the school is prepared to operate. Preparation to operate shall require a final authorization of the Board of Regents based upon the commissioner's recommendation.

PHASE 2: READINESS



Shortly after receiving preliminary approval, applicants that enter Phase 2 are required to attend a RIDE-developed readiness orientation that introduces them to the steps necessary to obtain final authorization and to successfully open a charter school. Final authorization to operate depends upon the applicant having achieved the following project readiness criteria:

Incorporation – The entity operating the charter school must have articles of incorporation filed and approved by the Rhode Island Office of Secretary of State.

Financial Review – All applicants must have their project's business plan, financial management procedures, and other relevant financial information reviewed by the Rhode Island Office of Auditor General.

Governance – The school must have an established governance structure (i.e. board of trustees, board of directors, etc.) to provide proper governance and oversight of school operations.

Administrator – The school must have in place a qualified chief administrator (i.e. Head of School, Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer) to oversee day-to-day operations.

Faculty Plan – The school must have a staffing plan designed to put in place a faculty that clearly meets student need and is consistent with the school's program design.

Student Enrollment – The school must have demonstrated that at least 50% of the school's first-year enrollment has committed to enrolling in the school.

Housing – The school must have identified an appropriate building (permanent or temporary) for operating the school.

RIDE & Applicant
develop **Final
Charter**, including
**Initial Accountability
Plan**

Applicant and
sending
district(s) sign
MOU

Alongside completing these tasks, applicants develop a final charter with RIDE. The final charter will take the aspirations in the application to the next stage of refinement: it lays out key school operational details, a number of assurances required by statute, and—the most crucial piece—what the school will accomplish over the five-year charter term. This latter portion of the charter will be the school’s Initial Accountability Plan. This plan will include RIDE-developed goals of academic performance, school-level conditions, and organizational viability; and school-specific goals developed by applicants. Schools will be evaluated against these goals annually, and their progress towards these goals will be the basis for renewal decisions.

Applicants must also negotiate an MOU with their sending districts for all necessary support services (e.g. transportation, funding, etc.).

PHASE 3: FINAL AUTHORIZATION

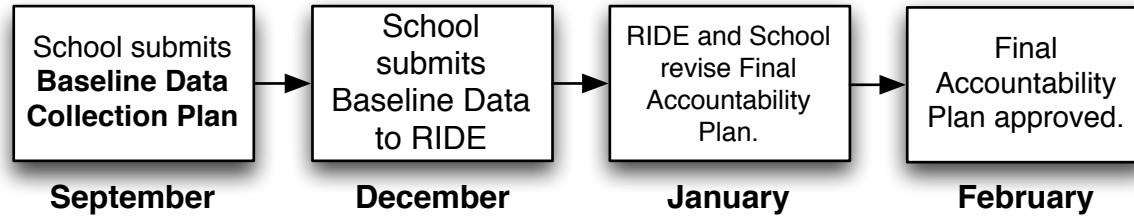
Board of Regents
grant
Final Charter.

March Y1

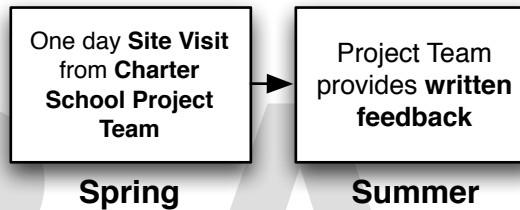
Applicants who successfully complete Phase 2 will receive a recommendation from the Commissioner. Informed by this recommendation, the Board of Regents may grant final authorization to operate by approving the final charter.

OPEARTING YEAR 1: Start-up

Accountability Plan

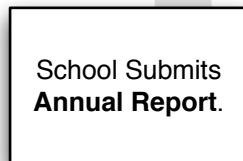


Site Visit

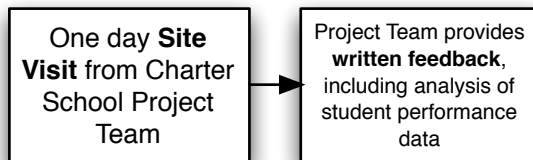


OPERATING YEAR 2

Ongoing Oversight



September

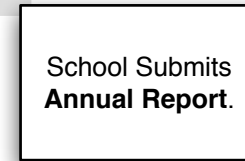


Spring

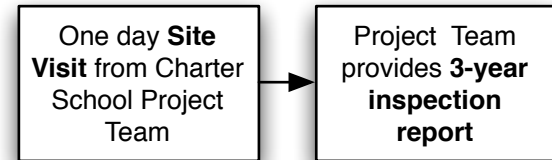
July

OPERATING YEAR 3

Ongoing Oversight



September



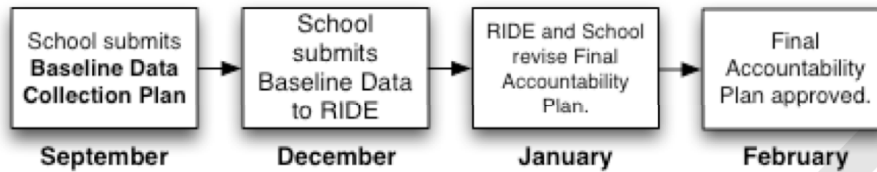
Spring

July

OPERATING YEARS 1 - 3

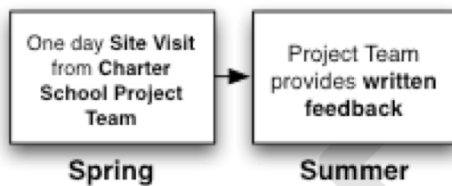
YEAR 1 - START-UP

Accountability Plan



Over the course of their first year, applicants will develop a Final Accountability Plan with RIDE. Schools will begin this process in September by submitting a plan for gathering baseline data on all identified school-specific indicators. Schools will submit baseline data to RIDE in December. In January, RIDE will work with the school to refine its measures based on preliminary data, and identify and develop additional school-specific goals and measures if necessary. In February, the final accountability plan will be approved RIDE, and the school's charter updated accordingly. Moving forward, the school will be evaluated annually on progress towards the goals in the plan.

Site Visit



In the spring of the applicant's first year of operation, RIDE's Charter School Project Team will formally visit the school for the first time. Members of the team will be from the Office of Transformation, and RIDE's Division of Accelerating School Performance. The team's visit will focus primarily on whether the school is building the necessary systems and structures for student success. Early in the summer, the Project Team will offer a written overview of its findings to the school.

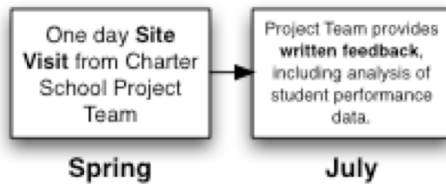
YEARS 2 & 3: ONGOING OVERSIGHT

Annual Report (Years 2 & 3)



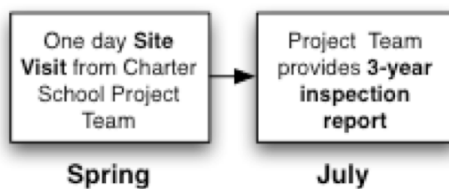
In September of the school's 2nd year, the school will begin the cycle of annual reporting. As required by statute, the school will submit a report to the Commissioner and the community on its progress in meeting accountability plan goals. The school will be required in this report to address any negative findings by the Project Team during the previous year's site visit.

Site Visit (Year 2)



The Project Team will visit the school for the second time in the spring of the school's second year. This visit will begin the dialogue of whether or not the school's systems and structures are working properly to provide success for all students. In July, the Project Team will provide a written overview of its findings, including an analysis of the school's first usable year of student performance data.

Site Visit (Year 3)



In the school's third year, the Project Team's visit will be much more extensive. By statute, the Board of Regents has the authority to revoke a school's charter if it is not a "high-performing charter school." Thus the third year site visit will be a high-stakes, summative evaluation that covers all aspects of the school's accountability plan that require qualitative validation. In July, the Project Team will publicly release an extensive report of its findings.

OPERATING YEARS 4&5: Renewal

Annual Report

School Submits
Annual Report.

September Y4

Renewal

**Renewal Site
Visit from Charter
School Project
Team**

Spring Y4

School Submits
**Renewal
Application.**

May Y4

Public Hearing

June Y4

Commissioner
makes Renewal
Recommendation

Board of Regents
provides
Renewal
Decision

July Y4

→ **Revoked or Re-chartered**

RIDE conducts
**Analysis for
Affected
Students**

Summer Y4

RIDE Issues
RFP for new
providers.

Summer Y4

Commissioner
provides Final
Recommendation

Board of Regents
issues Final
Decision

December Y5

Renewed

Board of Regents issues
Charter for
**Conditional(2yr.) or
Full(5yr.) 2nd Term**

August Y5



OPERATING YEARS 4&5: RENEWAL

ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Report

School Submits
Annual Report.

September Y4

Schools will submit annual reports in the September of their fourth year describing the previous year and outlining plans for improvement if necessary.

RENEWAL

Data Sources

Renewal Site
Visit from Charter
School Project
Team

Spring Y4

School Submits
Renewal
Application.

May Y4

Public Hearing

June Y4

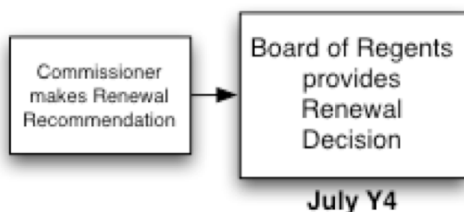
The Commissioner will base renewal decisions on three primary data sources: a comprehensive renewal report from the Charter School Project Team, a renewal application from the school, and feedback from the community at a public hearing.

Renewal reports will include detailed findings from extensive renewal site visits conducted in the spring of the school's fourth year as well as all relevant findings from previous year's annual reports and Project Team feedback.

The renewal application developed by the school in the May of the school's fourth year will provide two key sources of information: (1) any important new or supplemental information not included in the Renewal Report; and (2) an articulation of the school's strategies and capacities for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term.

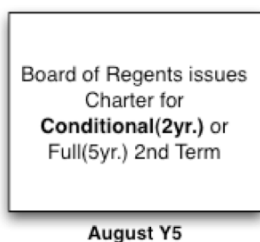
Public hearings conducted in June of the school's fourth year will also provide the Commissioner and Board of Regents with new information not provided by the Project Team's report.

Renewal Decision



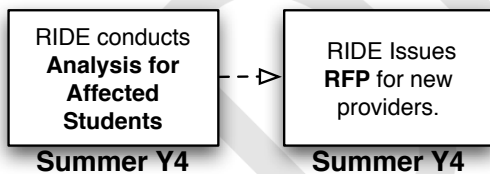
The Commissioner will use the data described above to generate a recommendation for the school to continue operation for a second charter term, or whether it should be closed or re-chartered (have its management replaced). Informed by this recommendation, the Board of Regents may renew, re-charter, or revoke a school's charter by July of the school's fourth year of operation.

Renewed



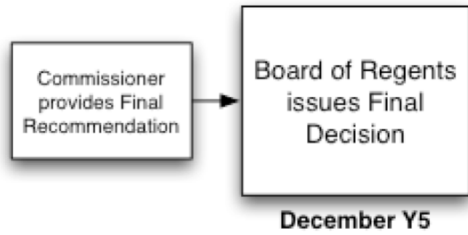
If a school is renewed, the Board of Regents will vote the following month on whether the school should be granted a conditional, 2-year charter or another full, 5-year charter. Conditional charters will only be for those applicants whom have come close to meeting academic performance targets and whom the Commissioner determines has the necessary school-level conditions to meet RIDE's performance expectations during the conditional charter term. Full charter terms are only for those schools that have unambiguously met or exceeded academic performance expectations.

Revoked or Re-chartered



If a school's charter has been recommended for revocation or re-chartering, in the summer of the school's fourth year, RIDE staff will conduct an analysis of the new schools the troubled charter's students would be likely to attend if the troubled charter were shuttered. If the school's student body would not benefit from attending different schools, the Commissioner will issue an RFP inviting applicants to submit proposals to assume governance of the school and continue serving the existing students.

Final Decision



Informed by the Commissioner's recommendation for revocation or re-chartering, in December of the school's fifth year, the Board of Regents will issue a final decision.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Prospectus – A slimmer, “first round” version of the full charter application.

Charter Application Review Committee – An advisory committee comprised of Board of Regents members, and education professionals from within and outside RIDE. This group will have deep expertise in instructional practice, finance, law, and education policy, evaluation, and governance.

Readiness Orientation - A RIDE-developed orientation that introduces preliminarily approved applicants to the steps necessary to obtain final authorization from the Board of Regents and for successfully opening a charter school.

Accountability Plan – The portion of a school’s charter that lays out what it will accomplish over the charter term. This plan will include RIDE-developed goals of academic performance, school-level conditions, and organizational viability; and school-specific goals developed by applicants. Schools will be evaluated against these goals annually, and their progress towards these goals will be the basis for renewal decisions.

Charter School Project Team – A team of RIDE staff that will conduct annual site visits to schools. Members of the team will be from the Office of Transformation, and RIDE’s Division of Accelerating School Performance.